KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor. All answers appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue. Guest editors will continue to appear occasionally.

Quick Chaws

No, that's not the brand of a chewing tobacco. It's an earlier version of KICKSHAWS. Peter Newby has provided a run-down on this unusual word: until the 17th century, KICKSHAWS was the singular form and QUELQUE CHOSE was the plural, or at least the most popular plural, as variations such as QUELQUE CHOICES, QUICK CHOWS, QUICK CHAWS and even QUECK SHOES were readily available. It was only in the 17th century that KICKSHAW (a tidbit or trifle) became the recognized singular and KICKSHAWS the plural.

The Educational Eight Beatitudes

Then Jesus took his disciples up the mountain, and, gathering them about him, he taught them, saying:

> Blessed are the poor.
> Blessed are the hungry.
> Blessed are those who mourn.
> Blessed are the oppressed...

Then Simon Peter said "Do we have to write this down?" And Andrew, "Are we supposed to know this?" And James, "I don't have any papyrus with me." And Philip, "Will we have a test on this?" And Bartholomew, "Do we have to turn this in?" And John, "The other disciples didn't have to learn this." And Matthew, "Can I be excused?" And Judas, "What does this have to do with the real world?"

Then one of the Pharisees who was present asked to see Jesus's lesson plan and inquired "Where is your anticipatory set? Where are your objectives in the cognitive domain?"

And Jesus wept.

Dr. William Bagford of the University of Iowa distributed this in an education class. It's one of those anonymous bulletin board creations, obviously produced under divine inspiration.

Art and Wordplay

As in previous Kickshaws, here is another wordplay statement. Will Shortz draws comparisons between art and wordplay:

One purpose of art (and I use this term in the broadest sense) is to shock the viewer into seeing part of the world in a new way. That's one of my goals in making word puzzles. Most people consider words only as a means of communication; in my puzzles, solvers are forced to consider them as letters to be dropped, added to, rearranged, or interlocked, as sounds to be manipulated, meanings to be punned upon, etc. Puzzles make solvers think of language in a completely different way. In addition, it has been said that puzzling is the only form of literature that forces the reader to participate, which is a nice thought in these days of mostly passive entertainment.

Permutations Ad Infinitum

Nyr Indictor writes "Your May and August 1993 Kickshaws discuss the number of grammatical permutations of sentences made up of the words PAT BILL and SUE." Nyr points out that many other names could also work: BOB, BUCK, CHUCK, ECHO, MARK, RIP, ROB, TUCK. Any permutation of those makes not one, but two or more, perfectly interpretable sentences.

Bob, bill Buck, chuck Echo, mark Pat, rip Rob, sue Tuck
Bob Bill, buck Chuck, echo Mark, pat Rip, rob Sue, Tuck

Each of these is a string of two-word commands preceded or followed by the names of the addressee. There are numerous alternative punctuations, but some would be quite contrived.

The list of names could be extended indefinitely if one includes last names (HURT, KING, PECK, etc.) and foreign names. Ultimately any word can be a name (consider MOON UNIT and DWEEZIL ZAPPA), and most nouns can be verbed, so this exercise becomes trivial very quickly. A more interesting exercise would be to ask whether there are four-word sentences in which all permutations are grammatical, and where none of the words is a name.

The Palingram Cup of Susan Thorpe

Continuing Jeff Grant's theme of "Palindromes on the Tennis Court" [May Kickshaws], we all remember AGASSI'S SAGA on the centre court when he won the Wimbledon Men's Singles title last year. Were we also aware, I wonder, of The Palingram Cup, an event being played on the outside courts?

Although not so prestigious an event as the Wimbledon Championships, The Palingram Cup, renowned for its "verbal" shots, attracts competitors of all ages. I recall one particular clash between the fiery youngster Bob Mason and the near-veteran, good old "Uncle" Sam, everyone's favourite. Definitely chalk and cheese! When Sam questions a decision, he does so with a twinkle in his eye. Bob reacts somewhat differently!

Sam: ON LINE?
Umpire: NO, NO SAM...ONE CALL
Sam: A BALL ACE?
Umpire: NO...MASON ONE NIL

Sam: NO!

Umpire: LINESMAN HAS CALLED YOU OUT, BOB
Bob: OH, SOD! A BEAUTY BALL ON LINE!...SCUM!

Umpire: HE HAS TWO PENALTY POINTS
Bob: WHAT???!! O, SHIT, PA...ONE'S PLENTY!

Now I Won

In another sporting bit of wordplay, Susan writes: As a nation, the British are currently proud to number among their ranks the new Formula One Grand Prix World Motor Racing Champion, Nigel Manseli. Nigel and his family have this year moved to Florida, whilst retaining their home in the Isle of Man. It should be pointed out that Nigel's wife is called Rosanne, that Nigel and his Brazilian rival, Ayrton Senna, are not exactly the best of buddies, and that in the U.K. we have two major car break-down rescue organisations, one of which is the R.A.C. (Royal Automobile Club). Being one of the main armchair Formula One devotees inspired this item which started life as the first line below, and then it grew!

Nigel's leg in
R.A.C.? Nigel's leg in car!
R.A.C.? Nigel's SOSs..leg in car!
R.A.C.'s Anne's? Nigel's SOSs...leg in Senna's car!
Sore? R.A.C.'s Anne's? Nigel's SOSs...leg in Senna's care, Ros!

Muses Reverse Sum

The above palindrome is by Peter Newby, who wonders if any normal-sounding palindromes can be made with two or more number names. I summed the following by using math symbols treated as punctuation; they're ignored in reversing the words. The last one is an infinite series that goes forever in both directions.

ONE + NINE = NINE? NO
ONE TEN IN SIX IS NINE (TEN = O)
ONE? NO, SIX IS SIX. IS ONE? NO!
ONE = NONE. NO ONE = NINE. NO ONE = NONE. NO
...ONE + TEN - ONE - TEN + ONE + TEN...

Lettershift Lady

Last summer I brought the Word Calculator to the children's literature class I teach. I showed it to the students as part of a discussion on wordplay. After class, a student wanted to try it out.

"Let's see," she said. "What should I look up?"

"Try your last name. I tried mine, and the first three letters shifted to GIL, my father's first name."

She set it for her last name, BERRY, and turned the tin can around slowly. A few moments later she found--to our surprise-- the middle three letters of BERRY shift to ANN. Her name <u>is</u> ANN BERRY!

Anagram Word Squares

Peter Newby has found double squares in which each word is an anagram of the other five words in that square. However, if you reverse each square you get standard squares each with additional anagrams. Each square is followed by its reversed version:

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E A R   R A E     T E A   A E T     S P A   A P S
R E A   A E R     A T E   E T A     A S P   P S A
A R E   E R A     E A T   T A E     P A S   S A P
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The Wringing Wet Rafter

During the Second World War, Peter writes, a lexicographer was drafted into the U.S. Navy and served aboard a destroyer that was torpedoed during the Battle of Midway. At the time that his ship was struck the young man was revising that part of the dictionary concerned with the letter S. He had gotten as far as SIN when he suddenly found himself in the Pacific clinging to a piece of wreckage within yards of safety aboard a raft manned by some of his colleagues. As he contemplated his next move, an apt definition of the troublesome word came to him. Hence, the phrase you'll find in your pocket edition of Webster's International: SIN, COARSE WHIM.

Express Mail Oxymorons

O.V. Michaelsen has found a number of oxymorons that haven't yet seen the light of the printed page. Here is a complete selection:

> at this time in history, drive-in exit, early train, extra low (price), extraordinary, history in the making, marine airmen, "No comment", not to mention, objective/unbiased opinion, preventive medicine, sunshade, Thin Super Maxi, tomboyish girl, turning straight, twelve o'clock in the afternoon, wireless cable

More Auto Accident Statements

Recently I listed several auto accident statements that O.V. Michaelsen found. Peter sent a few more that were submitted to the Norwich Union, one of England's leading insurance companies. Hayley Stimpson, spokeswoman for the company, said "Accidents are not usually laughing matters but every job has its bright side. Often the claims make perfect sense but need a little thinking about." Language crashes over there just as it does here.

> The dog that ran into the road was fully to blame--it ran away without stopping to exchange names and addresses
> The other driver was to blame for driving in an erotic manner
>
> I cannot really say [who was to blame]; my eyes were shut at the time
> I can only say that if there had been a pavement on the side and the cyclist had been on it instead of the road, then I probably would have missed him
> [My witness] cannot read or write and is blind and deaf

Aideed in Somalia

The name Aideed has become a household word, like Noriega or Hussein. What wordplay lies within? While a natural-sounding palindrome seems unlikely, the phrase I AM AIDEED, written in a circle, can be read forwards starting with I or backwards starting with the I in Aideed. Indeed.

Clerihews for Today

Ralston Bedge has been on a Clerihew binge. He's composed over 200 of them on famous people, past and present. A sample:

Vaclav Havel
Wrote a novel
About times growing rockier
In Czechoslovakier.

Sebastian Bach
Was wound up like a clock.
He needed a quaalude
For the F-minor Prelude.

Charles Dickens
Had sex with chickens.
They caught him in bed
With a Rhode Island Red.

Michael Jackson
Looks Anglo-Saxon
After all that nasty
Rhinoplasty.

Joseph McCarthy,
Hirsute and swarthy,
Never looked pretty
Before his committee.

Sylvia Plath
Was awful in math
But wrote several tomes
Of passable poems.

Leontyne Price
Is frightened of mice.
One crawled up her sleeve
During recitativ.

Harry S Truman
Was fond of albumen.
He said to the folks
"I'm sick of your yolks."

Joseph Pulitzer
Sat down at the Wurlitzer
And pounded his organ
For J. Pierpont Morgan.

Florentine Giotto
Got thoroughly blotto
And talked hooey
With Cimabue.

St. Bonaventure
Busted a denture
And swallowed his rosary
In an evening's gaucherie.

Billy Graham
Said sex was a sham.
He stuck to the Gospel
Emission impossible.

Internal Words, Totally-Disconnected Words

In the August 1981 Kickshaws, Alan Frank cited ANOTHER in mechANOTHERapy as the longest-known unrelated word contained in a longer word. Chris McManus has found two 9-letter internal words to raise the odds: paINTERLINEss (in Web 3) and eccENTROPIESis (in the 23rd edition of Stedman's Medical Dictionary), meaning "pressure from within outward". The former is also an example of a word deletion, since the outer shell is PASS. He rejected solutions where the internal word and full word had suffixes in common, such as intRAVENOUSly and phLOGISTICALly.

A related question that Chris raises: what is the longest totally-disconnected internal word (none of the letters are adjacent)?

Curiously, the best examples he could find are only nine letters long. DEMENTIAL in aDrEnoMyEloNeuropaThIcAlLy, ECHOLALIA in EnCepHalOmyeLorAdicuLopathIcAlly, and PREAORTIC in hyPeRbEtAlip-OpRoTeInemiC are single word-within-word examples. He also found four nine-letter words in the controversial 45-letter PNEUMONOULTRA-MICROSCOPICSILICOVOLCANOCONIOSIS: EMISSIONS, PEMMICANS, PENICILLI and PENTOSANS. Any ten-letter internal or totally-disconnected words?

Lends

As a follow-up on alternades, Chris suggests the phenomenon of "lends", a term he uses for words that are half-alternades. If you take alternating letters in some words, one, but not both, of the resulting letter-sequences forms a word. LENDS itself is a half-alternade of aLtErNaDeS. The longest full alternade is TRIENNIALLY. Surprisingly, under Chris's looser conditions, the champion words are only three letters longer. Some of the best include POROSES in uPrOaRiOuSnEsS, PALPATE in PhAlLoPlAsTiEs, PALLIAL in PhAlLaLgIcAlLy, ACROSES in cAlCaReOuSnEsS. Slightly shorter but amusing lends include POETESS in PrOtEcTrEsSeS, SEDATES in StEaDfAsTnEsS, ORDEAL in nOnReDeEmAbLe, BRAINS in BaRbArIaNiSm, RIFLES in fRuItFuLnEsS, and NICETY in iNdIsCrEeTlY.

At the Collectibles Show

In the February 1992 issue, Alfred Lubran presented an extensive collection of collectible words--that is, terms for collectors of different objects. This poem features some of those terms; the last term was coined for the occasion.

"Oh, have you got a biscuit-tin?
I don't care if a biscuit's in,"
    Inquired the Tenerbisophilist.
"Not me, I'm into garden gnomes
That people put around their homes,"
    Replied the wise Hobophilist.
"I'm looking for sharp pointed spears.
They help me pierce my pointy ears,"
    Winced brave Madame Sperephilist.
"That seems to make a little sense,
But I crave whipping instruments,"
    Growled Dr. Flagellophilist.
"I search around the ponds and lakes
For slick and slimy skins of snakes,"
    Hissed Mrs. Ophisophilist.
"By God, I want religious tracts
From any sects with any facts!"
    Prayed Reverend Guruophilist.
"My bag is books, limp-leather books!
I keep them in limp-leather nooks!"
    Thus yapped the loud Yappophilist.
"I'd like a pair of anything,
I'd like a pair of anything,"

Rejoined Symmetrolophilist.
"And so it goes for rows and rows
At antique and collectible shows,"
Quoth I, the Logolophilist.

Ben Pewtery on Whelm

Several **Word Ways** ago, Ben Pewtery writes, a correspondent announced the coining of a new witty term, UNDERWHELMED. The following issue printed a ferocious retort quoting chapter and verse of a history of this term. But, what is this WHELM that engenders such passion, be one OVER or UNDER it?

Consider the substantive WHELM, now found only in the English county of Suffolk. A reader who finds himself or herself in this southeastern corner of Britain and states that he or she is either UNDER or OVER a WHELM is quite likely to bemuse the poor native as he understands a WHELM to be a wooden drainpipe, the ancestral form of which was a tree trunk, halved vertically, and turned with its concavity downwards to form an arched watercourse. However, the verb to WHELM, meaning 'to turn upside down or to turn with the concave side downwards' is retained only in the speech of a totally-different county, Northampton. Presumably, the carpenters of Northampton still construct drainpipes for the waterlogged residents of Suffolk. The figurative sense of the verb WHELM 'to bear down like a flood; hence, to involve in destruction or ruin' obviously arose from the plight of early recreational linguists who attempted to place themselves either above or below Suffolk wooden drains in the interests of some long-forgotten logological experiences. The early English Scrabble players scored heavily with Suffolk drains then spelt QWELM, but when they inflected the now-obsolete verb meaning 'to overturn, capsize' in the past tense they were restricted to WHELMYD. There is no record of any attempt to play witty, high-scoring constructions such as UNDERQWELMYD, as they would have regarded such to be nonsense. How on earth can something be under-over-turned, not to mention the tautology of its sister wit, over-over-turned?

Twinkle, Twinkle

Twinkle, twinkle, little car,
How I wonder what you are.
From this distance, who could say
Cadillac or Chevrolet?

Getting Your Words' Worth

There's a new wordplay book on the block. Getting Your Words' Worth (Warner Books, 1993; $7.99) has basic word puzzles, games, and lists that may appeal to **Word Ways** readers but probably won't surprise them. The authors, Rod L. Evans and Irwin M. Berent, have aimed the book at a non-wordplay audience, and their familiarity with the field seems limited to the most popular authors (citing, as they do, Bergerson, Borgmann, and Gardner). It's fun to look through the book to find the things that don't quite seem to work. For instance, the first chapter discusses the

shapes of letters, including mirror words such as HIDE, BOX, and OXIDE, which look the same when viewed upside down in a mirror. But they end the chapter with the question "What do the following letters have in common: cdilmvx?" The answer, of course, is they're all Roman numerals, a property that doesn't have anything to do with shapes. The writers coin new terms for old forms. **Aptanagrams** are anagrams that are logically related, like ENRAGED and ANGERED. Wordplay aficionados consider aptanagrams to be simply anagrams, and nonrelated anagrams as transposals. Other coinages include **gramograms** (words that sound like letters, like 'eff' or 'cay'), **literordinyms** (letter-order words, like 'gyMNOPlast'), and **inaptronyms** (like 'Cardinal Sin', the Manilan archbishop). They refer to word-order palindromes as **pseudodromes**, and introduce a kind of cheater's pseudodrome ("Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"), terming it a **pseudo-pseudodrome.** In the introduction, the authors take a swipe at English teachers, which seems an odd way of driving off a potential audience: "After all, many teachers want you to believe that the study of English is a serious business and that words are what they seem and wear no disguises." So, if you're an English teacher, this book's not for you. But if you teach mechanical engineering, philosophy, German, trigonometry, nursing, or anything else, you might want to pick up this book.

Linear Logic

This logic exercise involves changing the meaning of a series of statements. For instance, in these two 3-line sets--

SET 1...	BECOMES	SET 2
1. Line 2 is false		1. Line 2 is false
2. Line 3 is true		2. Line 3 is false
3. Line 1 is false		3. Line 1 is true

--you read the lines in order and adjust the statements as you come to them to make them "true". In Set 1, Line 1 says that Line 2 is false. So change Line 2 to read "Line 3 is false". Then read the new Line 2 and follow the new direction. Since it now says that Line 3 is false, change Line 3 to read "Line 1 is true". Set 2 shows the new set-up, which in turn would be read and changed by the same method.

To simplify matters, you need only write T or F after each line to give it its current truth value. Using the above sets, here is a list of truth values for all readings up to the point where the truth values start repeating.

READING 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Line 2 is F	F	F	T	T	F	T	F
2. Line 3 is T	F	T	F	F	F	T	T
3. Line 1 is F	T	T	F	T	F	F	F

Now try to figure out the truth values at the second reading for each of these next four sets. If you continue reading Set C, what happens?

A:
1. Line 2 is false
2. Line 3 is false
3. Line 4 is false
4. Line 5 is false
5. Line 1 is true

B:
1. Line 5 is false
2. Line 4 is false
3. Line 3 is false
4. Line 2 is false
5. Line 1 is false

C:
1. Line 3 is false
2. Line 3 is false
3. Line 3 is false
4. Line 3 is false
5. Line 3 is false

D:
1. Line 3 is true
2. Line 5 is false
3. Line 1 is false
4. Line 2 is true
5. Line 4 is false

Tables like these can be extended to any number of lines. And the lines themselves can be much more complicated. The famous Liar's Paradox ("This sentence is a lie" is one version) becomes a truth when stated in this form: "1. Line 1 is false." After the first reading, it changes to "1. Line 1 is true." And it stays that way forever.

Just this morning, the children's TV program "Eureeka's Castle" included a dialog that resembles linear logic. Batley, a bat, is talking with Webster, a mischievous spider.

Batley: Webster always obeys rules
Webster: Yeah
Batley: I'll show you. Rule No. 1 is NO DANCING
(Webster dances)
Batley: Rule No. 2 is NO SINGING
(Webster sings)
Batley: Rule No. 3 is IGNORE THE FIRST TWO RULES

From Smart to Ork -- More Televised Wordplay

On a rerun of Get Smart!, the 1960s spy comedy series, Maxwell Smart and his wife/assistant "99" are working with two spies, code-named TODAY and TOMORROW. This sets the scene for an Abbott and Costello Who's-on-First bit of wordplay. At one point, Smart says "I'll see you at the Club Tonight today to save Today, Tomorrow!" Then when Tomorrow is shot and killed instead, Smart quips "Yes, 99, there's no Tomorrow."

On a showing of the old Mork and Mindy sci-fi comedy, the couple has a discussion about a compatibility test that they've found in a magazine.

Mork: Okay, here's the first question. When you and your spouse get into an argument, who always gives in?
Mindy: That's easy. I give in.
Mork: No, I do.
Mindy: No, me.
Mork: Okay, I give in--you.

Do You Speak Tlhingan?

Last August, according to the Cedar Rapids Gazette, "About 50 people took seats in the pews of a Lutheran church in northwestern Minnesota this past Sunday for a service conducted in

Klingon." (Klingons are aliens in the "Star Trek" series, and Wolf is a Klingon serving on the Star Ship Enterprise.) The story goes on to say that the Klingon language, called "tlhIngan", was being taught at a two-week camp in Red Lake Falls MN by a Spanish professor from the University of Minnesota. The professor had translated the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed into tlhIngan, and the sermon mentioned the story of the Tower of Babel. The extraterrestrial language, created by the producers of the mid-1980s movie "Star Trek III: The Search of Spock", is "as unlike any language we know on Earth as possible". Younger students have been enthusiastic about learning this exercise in interplanetary linguistics. But the Gazette writer, not wanting to boldly go where no one has gone before, concluded "With all the earth-bound languages that could be learned and used later, what's so great about expending so much energy on something so fleeting and imaginary?"

Crossing the Borders

What do you drink when you cross Canada and Minnesota? A Canasota. Other geographic locations can be connected to provide answers to questions you never would have asked. Answer the following:

1. What kind of clothes are most comfortable in Washington and Delaware?
2. How do you ask people to slow down in Kenya and Kuwait?
3. What do you get if you go to America and Indonesia?
4. How did you travel through Iran and Madagascar?
5. How do you calm yourself as you fly from Singapore to Tunisia?
6. Why didn't you take any pictures in the Cameroons and Oregon?
7. How do you tell jokes in Wisconsin and Italy?
8. What do you drink in Malta and Lichtenstein?
9. Where do you go after visiting Yugoslavia and Oklahoma?

Hopping the Rebus

On the left, each pair of letters represents an adjective. Each adjective fits next to a noun on the right to form a common two-word phrase. Can you match all eighteen correctly?

AL	cat	KG	baggage	SA	cutlet
BZ	doll	LE	limits	TM	customer
CT	brush	MT	test	UL	storm
DR	cell	NR	read	VL	cup
EZ	bee	QP	effort	XS	log
JL	show	RR	friend	YR	strength

The Letter Line

Take a line of any finite length and mark 27 equidistant points along it. Let the first point signify a blank, the second point A, the third B, the fourth C, and so on to Z. The result is fairly obvious: any letter or the blank is a point on the line.

Continue by putting 27 equidistant points between each adjacent

pair of letters (or letter and space), and mark them in a similar fashion, but with two symbols. For instance, between E and F, the points would be E(blank), EA, EB, EC,...,EZ. Now every two-symbol pair (bigrams or letter-and-blank) is coded by a point.

Continue at the third level, and every three-symbol pair is represented. Between EB and EC, the points would be EB(blank), EBA, EBB, EBC,...,EBZ. Likewise for fourth, fifth, hundredth, millionth, centillionth levels. No matter how many times a line is alphabetically segmented, it can be further segmented. Some points identify single words. Others represent strings with one or more blanks in them, and these points spell more than one word, such as "THE(blank)DOG".

At greater levels, the division is so accurate a single point spells the entire text of Gone With the Wind. Another spells Pride and Prejudice, and another...well, every novel, every poem, every play is a point on the line (ignoring the details of punctuation, capitalization, etc., which could be represented by dividing the segments into more points with more symbols). In fact, every text that could ever be written in English has its place. Every finite series of random letters and blanks.

Furthermore, if the line were divided an infinite number of times by an infinite number of alphabets and blanks, every text would then be represented an infinite number of times with the only difference being the number of blanks before the first letter and/or after the last letter in it.

You get the point.

The "A" Syndrome

For all their supposed differences, novels are really pretty much the same. If you rearranged every English-language novel so the words appeared in alphabetic order, then all novels would begin with the same word--A--and would continue with that word for several lines. If you then placed all the rewritten novels on a shelf in alphabetic order, the novel with the most As would go first.

Strings on a Cubic Lattice

In the August **Word Ways**, the editor introduced the concept of Word Worm, defining words as segments in three-dimensional space with the aid of a 3x3x3 cubic lattice with A through I labeling the cubes on the top face, J through Q the cubes in the middle face (omitting the center), and R through Z the cubes on the bottom face. Leonard Gordon has built a wooden device for searching out words in spatial arrangements. He writes "Establish a 27 node cubic lattice and assign letters to all but the central node just as Eckler did. But, instead of defining a word shape as he did, define it merely by running a string from letter to letter [and complete it with a string connecting the last letter to the first]. Every 4-letter word determines a quadrilateral within the lattice. Some are squares, some are tetrahedrons, etc."

Leonard goes on "Eckler asked for knotted words...I built a frame of two square boards joined by 8 dowels so as to make a cube and used tiny hooks to define the nodes. String a word out. For a knot, the string must not intersect itself and all letters must be different. Release string from all but the first and last hooks and pull it taut. You will recognize a knot if you have one. No mathematical definitions needed or possible. The minimum number of nodes (letters) needed to form a knot is 6. Here are "knotty" words I've found so far. I spent several crazy days fooling with my gadget to find these: CYMBLINGS, CYMLINGS, COFANE, PAVION, COWBIRD."

From Wordplay to Logology

In answer to my request for early childhood logology, the editor briefly discussed his experiences with wordplay from childhood to the present. Here are some of Ross's reflections:

> As a boy I thought wordplay consisted either of games such as Ghost or puzzles to be solved such as cryptograms. By college, I realized that more interesting wordplay involved games-versus-Nature: open-ended searches for all possible triple homonyms, or a type-collection of words containing different trigrams. In 1968, the journal **Word Ways** forever changed wordplay by liberating it from insularity; aficionados could for the first time build on each other's work. As a result, logology was no longer viewed as a collection of isolated curiosa, but a coherent body of knowledge such as mathematics or geology. However, unlike such classical disciplines, the dedicated amateur could quickly reach the forefront of logology to make new discoveries. Nowadays wordplay has two major streams: the newly-defined logological research, increasingly aided by the computer, and the long-unchanged constrained writing - palindromes, pangrams, lipograms and the like - which still seem to require the creative spark. Long may both flourish!

BUZZWORDS

This is the title of a 1993 paperback published by Crown Publishers for $7. Author John Davis and his friends have eavesdropped on a variety of occupations, from beauty contest director to mortician, from disc jockey to surgeon, to record their private jargon. Some 3000 examples, as up-to-date as CLINTON (used by pharmacists to describe an inhalant) and as gross as MARIE ANTOINETTE (a headless corpse), beguile the reader. My one criticism is that the terms are not alphabetized (nor is there an index), making it hard to relocate a half-remembered epithet. A surprising number of terms are rhyming pairs such as ROOSTER BOOSTER (a chicken-pox shot) or BRANDY ANDY (a wine steward); these may be fodder for a later ***Word Ways*** *quiz.*